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ABSTRACT

An exploratory study examined relationships between interpersonal communication theory and public relations from 1970 to 1990. One hundred thirty-six public relations campaign cases recognized for excellence by the Public Relations Society of America were analyzed for applicability of seven interpersonal theoretical perspectives. Information theory was the most applicable overall and, along with social exchange theory, did not vary over time. Systems theory was found to be the least applicable overall, but did not vary over time, along with constructivism, social influence, developmental approaches, and symbolic interactionism. The cases were also analyzed for importance of interpersonal communication in formative research and as a communication tactic, and were categorized and compared for types of public relations practiced as characterized by Grunig's models. One implication of the study is that public relations academics need to pay more attention to interpersonal communication theory--and its application within the context of their classrooms. (Contains 73 references and four tables of data. The taxonomy used in the content analysis is attached.) (Author/RS)

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Interpersonal Communication and Public Relations:

Twenty Years of Testing Theory in a Laboratory

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Abstract

This exploratory study examines relationships between interpersonal communication theory and public relations from 1970 to 1990. One hundred-thirty-six public relations campaign cases recognized for excellence by the Public Relations Society of America are analyzed for applicability of seven interpersonal theoretical perspectives. Information theory was found the most applicable overall and, along with social exchange theory, did not vary over time. Systems theory was found to be the least applicable overall, but did vary over time, along with constructivism, social influence, developmental approaches, and symbolic interactionism. The cases were also analyzed for importance of interpersonal communication in formative research and as a communication tactic, and were categorized and compared for types of public relations practiced as characterized by Grunig's models.

Scholars have long argued that communication research has been hampered by a limited and limiting history which split the field into two camps -- journalism schools and speech departments, and that the field would benefit from reconstitution of the two into a more unified, broader outlook (Delia, 1987, 1980; Lowery & De Fleur, 1988; Pingree, Wiemann, & Hawkins, 1988; Reardon & Rogers, 1988; Robinson, 1988; Rowland, 1988; Schramm, 1983).

It has been suggested that two sub-groups in communication research that could each advance from working together is interpersonal communication and public relations, even though historically public relations often has been associated closely with mass communication. This paper builds on that suggestion and extends an earlier exploratory study that analyzed the 35 Silver Anvil award-winning campaign case histories recognized in 1990 for campaign excellence by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) for expressed and implied application of interpersonal theoretical perspectives (Sallot, 1992).

That study concluded that interpersonal communication theorists could use public relations as a "laboratory" in which to develop and test their theories. It also suggested that interpersonal communication strategies are important to the effectiveness of public relations campaigns along with other strategies, such as mass media publicity placements, direct (unmediated) communications, and special events.

Unfortunately, that study was limited to campaigns conducted only in the year or so before 1990.

The purpose of the present work is to extend the analysis of the previous study and to examine the applicability of interpersonal communication theory to the practice of public relations over a longer period of time -- 20 years -- and revisit the questions posed before: how should public relations relate to interpersonal communication? Can public relations serve as a real-world laboratory in which communication theorists can test their hypotheses? And wouldn't the technicians toiling in the laboratory benefit from borrowing theory, especially interpersonal communication theory?

Why Apply Theory to Public Relations?

Public relations has suffered from inadequate definitions and lack of a unifying theory.[1] Echoing

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[1] From a fascinating chautauqua in Communication Monographs asking, "Why are there so communication theories?", it might be surmised that public relations' sufferance is in very good company indeed -- perhaps the entire field of communication. Berger (1991) lamented that the communications field does not foster theory development because of lack of commerce and unity among the sub-groups and risk aversions among academics and graduate students. Burleson (1992) suggested scholars need to take the field more seriously and develop a philosophy of communication. Redding (1992), resisting applied-theoretical and practical-pure dichotomies, argued that valuable theories can emerge from the applied and that descriptive quasi-theories might be useful. Likewise, Proctor (1992) noted that ties between the discipline and practical communication activities is an asset instead of a liability. Purcell (1992), noting there are plenty of theories harking back to 2500 years to rhetorical traditions asked if there are so few communication theories. Berger (1992) replied to all that communication theory has failed to answer very basic questions about how communication works, but that attacking

Lewin's (1951) oft-quoted observation that there is nothing so practical as a good theory, some have argued that effective public relations should draw from both professional practice and theory (IPRA, 1982). More recently, it has been suggested that public relations has evolved into two sometimes overlapping, sometimes conflicting branches -- the applied branch and the theory-based research/scholarship branch -- and as a result the field is facing a paradigm struggle, perhaps sparked by new models and theories of public relations presented just in the past decade (Botan, 1993).

This paper posits that a healthy symbiosis -- or, at least, potential symbiosis -- between the two branches has existed for a longer period of time than just 10 years, and that a careful cultivation of the relationship between the two branches will have bountiful yields: a thriving practice, that as it changes and evolves, will spark new theories that will have practical applications; and new theories that will help the practice continue to grow and evolve in ways meaningful to society.

But before further considering how and why public relations practitioners have used and may use theory to good effect and why theorists may look to the practice for inspiration, what it meant by "theory" needs clarification.

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some of those fundamentals will help motivate the theory development still needed to increase our understanding about communication. Most recently Craig (1993) asked why are there so many communication theories?

While it is not within the scope of this paper to debate definitions of theory, an operational definition can be adopted. Suggested by Terry (1989), the operational definition of theory for the purposes of this discussion is based on the assumptions that theories present a systematic view of observed phenomena; specify relationships between variables and how variables are related; explain past or present behavior; and predict, with a high degree of probability, future behavior (p. 282).

It is also useful to reconsider briefly what is meant by "public relations." Several recent, popular definitions focus on communication. For example, Long and Hazelton (1987) reviewed the literature to develop their definition that: "public relations is a communication function of management through which organizations adapt to, alter, or maintain their environment for the purpose of achieving organizational goals" (p. 6). Earlier, Grunig and Hunt (1984) suggested public relations is "the management of communication between an organization and its public" (p. 7). Taking a somewhat broader view, Pavlik (1987) proposed that public relations may have "evolved into the business of relationship management" (p. 118).

Pavlik's definition is interesting in light of research conducted by Ferguson (1984) questioning what areas in public relations would harbor "probability of productive theory development" as a prelude to proposing a research paradigm focus for the field (p. ii). Ferguson surveyed

abstracts of articles published in Public Relations Review for the nine years preceding. Articles were classified into three general groupings: (1) an introspective class of articles dealing with topics such as education, history, and ethics, and accounting for 43.9 percent of the articles; (2) practice or application of public relations covering management issues, implementation of public relations programs and campaigns, applied research methods, and the like, representing 52.1 percent; and (3) theory development, representing 4.1 percent.

Ferguson then identified three areas of "scholarship concerns unique" to public relations scholars that promised theory development potential as paradigm foci: social responsibility and ethics, social issues and issues management, and public relationships (p. 16). Of the three, Ferguson favored the last, with the relationship as the major focus of the research and unit of analysis, because

> it is difficult to think of any other field where the primary emphasis is on the relationships between organizations, between organizations and one or more groupings in society, or more generally with society itself. (p. 18)

The definitions of public relations cited earlier all appeal because of their simplicity. However, the Pavlik definition's broader approach as "relationship management" nicely complements the observations by Ferguson (1984) about theory in public relations and, since it seems most relevant to this discussion, will be the definition used in the present work.

The next section provides a brief review of pertinent literature comparing and contrasting interpersonal communication and mass communication with an emphasis on similarities and differences which can be extended to public relations.

Interpersonal and Mass Communication Compared

Traditionally, interpersonal communication contexts have included theories dealing with individuals in relationships or the relationships themselves, especially -- but not limited to -- dyads; mass communication contexts have dealt with broad societal levels of interaction with special emphasis on mass media (Littlejohn, 1982). This work argues that public relations might well serve as a bridge between the two, since public relations contexts often include communication between dyads as well as broader societal interactions.

Katz and Lazarsfeld (1966) described interpersonal communication as an intervening variable between mass communication and behavior change, and introduced the two-step model of mass media effects depicting interpersonal interactions as channels of mass media information, in which individuals engage in interpersonal communication about mass media content, exchanging information and influencing each other's opinions (Lowery & De Fleur, 1988; Reardon, 1987). Public relations campaigns frequently work to facilitate application of the two-step model and depend on word-of-mouth amplifications of public relations' mass media

publicity placements.

Mass media functions to provide glimpses of socially constructed reality, projecting "pictures in our heads" synthesized from the real world in Lippman's (1965) terms. News media, in effect, become the public's "window on the world" (Tuchman, 1978, p. 1). Mass communication influences the way people relate to one another interpersonally (Reardon, 1987). The assessment applies just as well to public relations: this work argues that, in many instances, public relations influences the way people relate to one another interpersonally.

In a world where mass media is omnipresent, there is growing recognition of the importance of interpersonal communication to mass communication (Chaffee, 1982). Likewise, this work argues there should be a growing recognition of the importance of interpersonal communication in public relations.

Public relations has historically been closely associated with mass communication because, until only recently, public relations practitioners usually were educated and worked as journalists before entering public relations (Neff, 1989). Also, public relations frequently targets mass media as a popular channel to carry its messages, thereby putting disproportional emphasis on publicity-gaining activities and media relations. But public relations also commonly employs interpersonal communication in carrying out its research and planning

functions and executing it strategies, tactics and evaluation processes.

Weighing similarities as well as differences between interpersonal communication and mass communication, Bryant and Street (1988) conclude that interpersonal and mass communication scholars currently "envision communicators, whether actors or perceivers, as choice-making entities who proactively seek, process, produce, and influence message environments" (p. 172).

Bryant and Street suggest that interpersonal and mass communication differ in (1) theoretical focus, with mass communication being preoccupied with receiver-oriented and interpersonal both receiver- and source-oriented, with an emphasis on the latter; (2) nature of the communication process, with mass and interpersonal communication each having varying active, recursive (involving feedback), interactive, and transactional patterns, depending on respective theoretical perspectives; and (3) outcomes of message perception in relation to receiver cognitions and attitudes: interpersonal research assumes cognitions and attitudes to be comparatively stable; mass communication assumes they are dynamic and subject to influence by the mediated message.

But Bryant and Street maintain that studying each other's models and sharing findings can only enrich both interpersonal and mass communication domains. Surely the same assumption applies to interpersonal communication and

public relations, at least as well as well as the assumption has served mass communication and public relations over the years.

In general, practitioners in public relations engage in communication in three different categories of relationships: 1) client/organization-practitioner relations; 2) journalist/media gatekeeper-practitioner relations; 3) members of target publics-practitioner relations. Interpersonal communication occurs within each of the three different categories. Therefore, it can be surmised that interpersonal communication theory in particular holds great heuristic and pragmatic value for public relations practitioners compared to other types of communication theory.

Two Basic Premises Proposed

The first basic premise to be tested in this work is that for some time public relations has been a suitable laboratory for the development and testing of interpersonal communication theories. Several different interpersonal meta-theoretical perspectives, such as constructivism, social influence, social exchange, developmental approaches, symbolic interactionism, and systems theory, are believed to have been applicable to public relations problems, though perhaps in varying degrees.

Applying theory -- especially communication theory -- to public relations is not a new idea. For example, Prior-Miller (1989) examined four theoretical perspectives rooted

in what she characterized as "sociological-organizational traditions" including symbolic interactionism, exchange theory, conflict theory, and structural-functional theory, and found that they each help explain various public relations communication phenomena under varying conditions.

In his study of internal public relations in a hospital organization, Kreps (1989) argued that information theory/uncertainty reduction was important to the organization as a system. He found that in the context of the system of the organization, information becomes a prerequisite to the development and implementation of relevant innovations to accomplish system-wide organizational development.

Johnson (1989) designed a research study applying a coorientation model perspective, focusing on the client-consultant dyad as the unit of analysis and the public relations practitioner "role as the object of coorientation" to examine effects of the system on current public relations role definitions to understand whether "adopted roles result from consultant choice or client prescription" (p. 243).

Reaching further back for applications of theory to public relations, classically rhetorical post-hoc evaluation of speaker's intent, oration, environment, and effect dates back at least to the Greeks but is central to many different types of public relations campaigns conducted today. Although research on compliance-gaining message strategies has been conducted mainly in interpersonal settings (Miller,

Boster, Roloff & Seibold, 1987), public relations messages that have compliance-gaining as a goal or component are common-place.

Building on the theme, Miller (1989) suggested that effective persuasion and effective public relations are closely associated because both are "primarily concerned with exerting symbolic control over relevant aspects of the environment" (p. 45). The most persuasive campaigns rely on multiple messages. In public relations, multiple messages often involve use of different channels, which may call upon different theoretical traditions including interpersonal communication theory for interpersonal public relations strategies.

More recently, Toth (1992) and others have argued for "pluralistic" studies and applications in public relations, involving rhetorical, critical, and systems perspectives. Building on that theme, Heath (1993), emphasizing meaning and organizational prerogatives over simple persuasion, pushed for the rhetorical perspective as the dominant paradigm for both study and practice in public relations.

Consideration of public relations campaigns invites further consideration of communication theory, which serves to inform campaigns about effective audience segmentation and message design, while campaigns provide the data for further theoretical development (Rosser, Flora, Chaffee & Farquhar, 1990). VanLeuven (1989) found five theoretical frameworks -- persuasion/learning effects, social learning,

low involvement, cognitive consistency, and value change -- useful for "understanding campaigns and their effects" (p. 201).

Unfortunately, the term "campaign" often "elicits images of combat in which self-interested sources attack the public with an armory of propaganda and persuasion techniques uniquely suited to manipulate beliefs and behaviors, and the public ranges from utterly defenseless to almost totally impregnable." These combative connotations of campaigns are particularly unfortunate in societies opting to "pursue social change via communication instead of coercion" (Roberts & Macoby, 1985, p. 565). Paisley (1981) noted that, contrary to the combative campaign connotation, substantial resources have been committed to using communication to bring about reform and social change.

Of course, information or an educational message to one individual is propaganda to another (McGuire, 1969). And certainly, Grunig's models of public relations, to be discussed in the next section, may account for different types of campaigns as much as the models account for different types of public relations driving the campaigns.

The second basic premise of this paper to be tested is that interpersonal communication strategies suggested by interpersonal communication theories have been for some time as applicable as other strategies, such as mass media publicity placements, direct (unmediated) communications, and special events, to problem-solving in effective public

relations campaigns.

If nothing else, the explanatory and predictive aspects of theory development would seem to be useful to practitioners. Botan (1989) suggested that looking at public relations as an "applied social science based in communication" in the social science theory development process will become a key link in increased professionalism in public relations (p. 99).

It appears that public relations practitioners need all the help they can get in the face of challenging new developments. Public relations is becoming increasingly more international in focus, involved in major conflicts, evolved from stressing production of publicity as its primary strategy to using communication to allow and encourage organizations and publics to interact -- all at a time when new technology is increasingly opening up new communication possibilities (Neff, 1989).

To further complicate the challenges, public relations practitioners perform a variety of management roles and functions while acting as liaisons between the organizations they represent and the organizations' publics, actual and intended. Among functions performed is ascertaining and influencing public opinion. When public opinion about the organization is favorable, the practitioner's function is maintenance and problem prevention. However, when public opinion is less than desirable, practitioners are expected to design and implement communication programs to change the

public's attitudes. By using theory-based models to drive strategy selection and implementation, probabilities of effectiveness are greatly enhanced (Comstock, 1989).

Theoretical applications to public relations might also enable practitioners to control outcomes, or at least influence probabilities of outcomes. Hazelton and Botan (1989) illustrated the notion with the example that positive or negative publicity may affect stock prices in predictable directions: with positive media coverage, stock prices are likely to rise and vice versa. Stock prices can be controlled in other ways, such as collusion between journalists and practitioner, a strategy which might be derived from game theory, but those behaviors in the real world are considered unethical and illegal. A practitioner applying a theory that prescribed intervention in the communication process with journalists to affect the valence of publicity would be exercising control, but within ethical and legal boundaries. Also, it is likely that at least some of those public relations-initiated communications between practitioner and journalist would be interpersonal in nature.

Education is thought to be important to any increase in application of communication theory to public relations practice. Terry (1989) asked practitioners and public relations faculty to rate the familiarity, validity and practicality of twenty sociological/communication-type theory/models, including balance, constructivism,

coorientation, expectancy-value, social learning, and uses and gratifications. Theories rated the most familiar were hierarchy of needs, classical conditioning, multi-/two-step flow, operant conditioning, dissonance, and systems theory. Highest rated for validity were systems theory, classical conditioning, dissonance, hierarchy of needs, operant conditioning, and agenda-setting. Highest rated for utility were systems theory, agenda-setting, hierarchy of needs, multi-/two-step flow, and dissonance.

Terry found that for both groups, the less familiarity with the theory, the lower the validity and practicality ratings. Overall, practitioners were less familiar with the theories than faculty, but familiarity ratings on the part of faculty were inconsistent, suggesting some difficulties in diffusion across disciplines. Terry reported a few respondents said "theories are not useful in practical public relations" (p. 297) but that several noted that "practitioners seldom use theories consciously, but unconsciously use them most of the time or extensively" (p. 289). Terry concluded that to integrate theory and practice to a greater extent, public relations academics need to teach theory and its applications more, supported by some emphasis in continuing education.

Grunig's Models: Four Types of Public Relations

Grunig (1989) has argued that public relations needs to shed its manipulative image, which he calls asymmetrical, and which he suggests is a product of public relations'

historical preoccupation with persuasion. As a substitute, he proposes a symmetrical perspective of public relations dedicated to managing conflict and promoting understanding, the earning of public acceptance and consent instead of the engineering of consent.

Introduced in 1984 (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, see Table 1), the four models may be described as: 1--press agentry/ publicity model (also one-way asymmetric), a propagana-driven public relations which seeks media attention at any cost; 2--public information model (also one-way symmetric), a news-bureau-type public relations staffed by journalists who serve as sources for news media but do not volunteer negative information; 3--two-way asymmetric model, which uses two-way communication in a manipulative fashion to research and identify persuasive messages most likely to gain compliance from target publics without affecting the organization's behavior; and 4--two-way symmetric, which uses conflict resolution communication strategies to bring about change in attitudes, opinions and behaviors of the organization as well as its publics with the intended outcome of the balanced exchange being mutual understanding.

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insert Table 1 about here

Grunig's four models are very similar to Dewey and Bentley's (1973) classic distinctions among types of scientific procedures. Grunig's models 1 and 2 are

reminiscent of Dewey and Bentley's action or self-action process; Grunig's model 3 evokes Dewey and Bentley's interaction process, and Grunig's model 4 recalls Dewey and Bentley's transaction process.

As applied to public relations, Grunig's models explain at least in part that there are different types of public relations practiced and indicate how four types of public relations differ in history, communication style, research, and practical application. Grunig (1989) has suggested that theories relating to propagandistic techniques best apply to model 1; public information campaigns and diffusion of innovations theories to model 2; persuasion and rhetoric to model 3; systems, pragmatics, coorientation and conflict resolution theories to model 4.

Grunig originally conceptualized the public-information model as the dominant model in contemporary practice, as reported in Table 1 (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). However, subsequent research (Grunig, 1989; J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1989, 1990) has indicated that organizations in reality practice several models together, with press-agentry the most popular overall; the public-information model the most popular with governmental agencies but also the most difficult to measure because it is seldom practiced alone; and the two-way asymmetrical the most popular in corporations. When practiced, the two-way symmetrical is likely to be applied in combination with the two-way asymmetrical.

Although research has found the models to be by no means definitive, there is no question that Grunig's models have contributed immeasurably to the field by generating a substantial body of research. Grunig and others have even argued that organizations using two-way symmetric models are "effective" and "excellent" (see, for example, J. Grunig, 1992; L. Grunig, 1986; Turk, 1986).

After reviewing the literature regarding Grunig's models, in addition to the two premises previously presented a research question also emerged: what are the relationships between applicability of the interpersonal theoretical perspectives under study and type of public relations campaigns as categorized by Grunig's four models of public relations? For example, given the systems orientation of Grunig's two-way symmetric model, systems theory should be more applicable in that model than any of the other three.

Method

The first premise to be tested is that for some time public relations has been a suitable laboratory for the development and testing of interpersonal communication theories. Are there differences in how interpersonal communication theories have been applied in effective public relations over time? If so, what are they? The second premise to be tested is that interpersonal communication strategies suggested by interpersonal communication theories have been for some time as applicable as other strategies,

such as mass media publicity placements, direct (unmediated) communications, and special events, to problem-solving in effective public relations campaigns. If there are any differences between the interpersonal and other types of strategies, what are they?

To test these two premises, all of the Silver Anvil award-winning campaign case histories recognized for campaign excellence by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) in five-year increments over the 20-year period of 1970 through 1990 were content analyzed for expressed and implied application of interpersonal theoretical perspectives. A total of 136 campaign case histories representing all of the PRSA Silver Anvil winning cases for the years 1970 (N=19), 1975 (N=25), 1980 (N=29), 1985 (N=28) and 1990 (N=35) were analyzed.[2]

The content analysis was conducted on each of the case histories with the help of a taxonomy constructed expressly for this purpose (see Appendix A). The taxonomy consisted of descriptions of basic assumptions from each of several different traditional interpersonal theoretical perspectives, including constructivism, information theory, social exchange, social influence, developmental approaches, symbolic interactionism, and systems theory; an operational definition for each of the theoretical perspectives; and an example of a hypothetical public relations problem which

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[2] A list of the 136 cases is available from the author.

could apply to the theoretical perspective.

A research question was also to be tested: What is the relationship, if any, between applicability of the interpersonal theoretical perspectives under study and type of public relations campaigns as categorized by Grunig's four models of public relations? To answer the research question, the taxonomy also included an estimation of which of the Grunig models might apply to each of the theoretical perspectives. Recognizing that organizations may practice more than one Grunig's model simultaneously (Grunig, 1989), the content analysis identified the most dominant model practiced in each particular case.

In conducting the content analysis, interpersonal communication was assumed to be the process by which two persons share symbols through interaction so that the operational definition allowed for interpersonal communication to occur via telephone and personalized correspondence.

Each case history was rated on a four-point scale for each of the following components: importance of interpersonal communication to the overall success of the campaign; potential application of each of the seven theoretical perspectives; importance of interpersonal communication in formative research; relevance of other communication tactics compared to interpersonal communication, including direct, unmediated communication (such as newsletters, speeches), special events, and mass

media publicity carried in newspapers, magazines, and broadcasts mediated by a gatekeeper; and dominant Grunig model category.

The four-point ratings scale was as follows: 0 = not important at all/not applicable; 1 = not important; 2 = important; and 3 = very important. All ratings were conducted during a five-day period by the author, who had prepared the taxonomies and studied the interpersonal communication literature cited in them under the direction of Dr. Rebecca J. Welch Cline, associate professor, Department of Communication Processes and Disorders, University of Floirida. The 136 cases were rated once, constantly referring to the guidelines of the taxonomy, then 25 cases were re-rated a week later. Of 350 items, ratings on 339 were duplicated for a 97 percent coder reliability check.

For example, "The Texaco New World Symphony Tour of Latin America" case history from 1990 was the only one to achieve the highest ratings (3) for all criteria. The campaign consisted of Texaco sponsoring a tour of Miami's New World Symphony to Argentina and Uruguay, countries in which Texaco needed to rebuild its business relationships. The concerts, represented by a specially-designed logo, served as the springboard for corporate media tours, dinners, receptions, and private meetings between Texaco officials and key decision-makers in each of the countries, who used the occasions to communicate interpersonally. In

addition, some 26 speeches were given and 47 media interviews conducted. The campaign was very successful -- within four days of Texaco management's arrival in Buenos Aires, three oil exploration agreements worth $32 million to Texaco were executed.

By comparison, much lower ratings were assigned to "Drink in Good Health," an educational program designed by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power to assure area public elementary school students and their teachers that local water was safe to drink. Strategies centered around instructional packets to teachers, science kits for students and plant tours and relied comparatively less on interpersonal communication strategies and theory.

Results

Of the 136 cases, 56% (N=76) were categorized as have been conducted on behalf of for-profit organizations, 25% (N=34) for non-profit organizations, and 19% (N=26) for government agencies.[3] One-third of the cases (N=45) were characterized as being most like Grunig's press agentry model, 18% (N=25) most like the public information model, 38% (N=52) most like the two-way asymmetric model, and 10% (N=14) most like the two-way symmetric model. Of the 46 cases that reported budget, the least expensive campaign had a budget of $500; the most expensive, $2 million.

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[3] One case was categorized differently in this study than the PRSA Silver Anvil designations. The re-vitalization of Underground Atlanta, a retail-entertainment complex, was classified by PRSA as "government" but as "for-profit" in this study.

P1: The first premise that several different traditional interpersonal theoretical perspectives are applicable to public relations problems was supported. The overall mean of applicability of the theories to the 136 campaign case histories was 2.3, which fell between "important" and "very important" on the ratings scale. Theories were rank ordered by applicability (with overall average means in parentheses) as follows: 1) information theory (2.8), 2) social influence (2.6), 3) symbolic interactionism (2.5), 4) developmental approaches (2.4), 5) social exchange (2.0), 6) personal constructivism (1.9), and 7) systems theory (1.6).

During the 20 year period from 1970 through 1990, analysis of variance yielded significant differences in how well five different interpersonal communication theories applied to the Silver Anvil case winners over time: personal constructivism ($F(4, 131) = 7.1$, $p < .0001$), social exchange ($F(4, 131) = 4.1$, $p < .004$), developmental approaches ($F(4, 131) = 5.4$, $p < .0001$), symbolic interactionism ($F(4, 131) = 9.2$, $p < .0001$), and systems theory ($F(4, 131) = 20.6$, $p < .0001$). (The means are presented in Table 2). There were no significant differences over time for applications of information and social influence theories.

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insert Table 2 about here

P2: The second premise, that interpersonal

communication strategies suggested by interpersonal communication theories have been for some time as applicable as other strategies, such as mass media publicity placements, direct (unmediated) communications, and special events, to problem-solving in effective public relations campaigns was supported. Over the 20 years of winning cases, interpersonal communication was found to be between "important" and "very important" compared with each of direct communication (M = 2.4), special events (M = 2.1), and mass media publicity placements (M = 2.5). There were no significant differences at the .01 level comparing importance of interpersonal communications with any of the three tactic categories among the five periods under study.

The research question asked what is the relationship, if any, between applicability of the interpersonal theoretical perspectives under study and type of public relations campaigns as categorized by Grunig's four models of public relations? The models were found to be positively correlated at the .001 level with systems theory (r = .58), developmental approaches (r = .33), and social exchange theory (r = .27), but negatively correlated with symbolic interactionism (r = -.32).

There also were significant differences in which of the four Grunig models predominated from 1970 to 1990 ($X(12)$ = 63.7, $p < .0001$). (See Table 3.)

insert Table 3 about here

Post hoc analyses also examined the extent that interpersonal communication was used in formative research in public relations and found interpersonal communication to be "important" (M = 2.0) overall in the formative research of these award-winning campaigns, but with significant differences over the years ($F(4, 131) = 9.3$, $p < .0001$). (The means are presented in Table 4).

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insert Table 4 about here

Discussion

This exploratory study, which extends and replicates many of the findings of an earlier pilot study (Sallot, 1992) analyzed the 136 Silver Anvil award-winning campaign case histories recognized in the 20-year period from 1970 through 1990 for campaign excellence by the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) for expressed and implied application of interpersonal theoretical perspectives. Like its preceding pilot study, this work found that interpersonal communication theorists may use public relations as a "laboratory" in which to develop and test their theories.

This study also concludes that interpersonal communication theories have had important applicability in applied public relations since 1970. The most relevant theory has been information theory and consistently so over time; social influence theory has also remained consistently

relevant in 20 years. The least dominant during the past 20 years overall has been systems theory, but that is rapidly changing, with significantly increased importance in 1990 compared with 1970. Personal constructivism was also more important in 1990 than in 1975 and 1980; social exchange theory was more important in 1990 than in 1980; symbolic interactionism has been steadily declining from 1970 through 1990. Developmental approaches were more applicable in 1990 than 1985.

The rise of applicability of systems theory and corresponding decline of symbolic interactionism seems to provide some support for Grunig's (1993) position that the two-way symmetric approach is favored over others concerned with image enhancement. Lending further credence to the Grunig argument is the finding that the vast majority of the incidences of the two-way symmetric model as the dominant model among these cases occurred in 1990; there were no incidences of the two-way symmetric model in 1970 through 1980. Conversely, most of the incidences of press agentry as the predominant model occurred in 1970.

Somewhat contrary to the Grunig position are the findings that the most popular of all the models is the two-way asymmetric, with its most frequent occurrence also in 1990, and that applicability of personal constructivism -- and its associated image enhancement -- was also on the rise in 1990. It is also interesting that while information theory remains most consistently dominant over time, the

public information model only accounts for 18% of cases over the 20 year period.

Given these findings, it logically follows that interpersonal communication strategies are as important to the effectiveness of public relations campaigns as other strategies, such as mass media publicity placements, direct (unmediated) communications, and special events. Likewise it follows that interpersonal communication is becoming increasingly important in the formative research necessary to effective campaign planning in the 1990s.

In reviewing these 20 years of public relations campaigns, it is interesting to note the growing sophistication and complexity of campaign planning as new technologies evolve and improved research techniques and capabilities become more widely accepted. The early emphasis on shot-gun approaches to mass media publicity as an excellent achievement in public relations campaigning is clearly eclipsed in more recent years by more varied approaches to reach more tightly defined audiences with an emphasis on two-way communication mechanisms to provide feedback and facilitate dialogue.

Implications

The notion of applying interpersonal communication theory to public relations clearly warrants more investigation. If Terry's (1989) conclusions are correct that education is key in motivating practitioners to apply theory in practice, then it might be surmised that public

relations academics need to pay more attention to interpersonal communication theory -- and application of that theory in public relations -- within the context of their classrooms.

This study also suggests that interpersonal communication strategies are important to the effectiveness of public relations campaigns along with other strategies, such as mass media publicity placements, direct (unmediated) communications, and special events. In the future, it might be useful to compare non-winning campaigns with winning campaigns in this regard to investigate further how interpersonal communication theories and tactics may contribute to excellence in public relations.

In addition, following McElreath's (1986) study of public relations activities within organizations, it might be useful to explore any possible links between theoretical perspectives and categorical activities and their associations with Grunig's models. Possible relationships between intended attitude, opinion, and behavior changes on the part of either target publics or client/organizations and theoretical perspectives; budgets allocated and spent; whether the sponsoring organization is for-profit or not-for-profit and theoretical perspectives might also be examined in future research.

Table 1

CHARACTERISTICS OF GRUNIG'S FOUR MODELS OF PR
(Source: Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 22)

Model #1 Characteristic:	Press Agentry/publicity model One-Way Asymmetric
Purpose	Propaganda
History	P.T. Barnum 1850-1900
Type of communication	One-way; total truth nonessential
Communication model	Source > receiver
Nature of research	Not much -- "count the house"
Where Practiced Today	Sports, theatre, product promotion
Est. % Today	15%

Model #2 Characteristic:	Public Information model One-Way Symmetric
Purpose	Disseminate information
History	Ivy Lee 1900-1920
Type of communication	One-way; total truth essential
Communication model	Source > receiver
Nature of research	Not much -- readability, readership
Where Practiced Today	Government, nonprofits, business
Est. % Today	50%

CHARACTERISTICS OF GRUNIG'S FOUR MODELS OF PR (cont'd).

Model #3 Characteristic:	Two-Way Asymmetric
Purpose	Scientific persuasion
History	Edward L. Bernays 1920s ›
Type of communication	Two-way; imbalanced effects favoring the organization and engineering of public consent by crystallizing opinion
Communication model	Source › receiver ‹ feedback
Nature of research	Formative; evaluative of public attitudes to determine organization's behavior to be promoted
Where Practiced Today	Competitive business; PR firms
Est. % Today	20%

Model #4 Characteristic:	Two-Way Symmetric
Purpose	Mutual understanding
History	Bernays, Cutlip et al, 1960-70s ›
Type of communication	Two-way; balanced effects for the organization and the public
Communication model	Group › ‹ Group
Nature of research	Formative; evaluative of understanding
Where Practiced Today	Regulated business; PR firms
Est. % Today	15%

Table 2

Means of Applicability of Interpersonal Communication Theories in PR Cases Over Time

	1970 (N=19)	1975 (N=25)	1980 (N=29)	1985 (N=28)	1990 (N=35)
Personal constructivism	2.1	1.4[a]	1.5[a]	2.0	2.4[a]
Social exchange	1.7	2.0	1.7[b]	2.0	2.4[b]
Developmental approaches	2.3	2.6	2.2	2.0[c]	2.7[c]
Symbolic interactionism	3.0[d]	2.8[e]	2.7[f]	2.3[de]	2.2[def]
Systems theory	1.0[g]	1.3	1.3	1.5	2.5[g]

Note: Row entries sharing superscripts are significantly different at the .05 level by Scheffe procedures.

Scale: The four-point ratings scale ranged from 0 = not important at all/not applicable to 3 = very important.

Table 3

Frequency of the Practice of Grunig's Models of Public Relations in Award-Winning PR Cases 1970-1990

Grunig Model:	Year: 1990	1985	1980	1975	1970	Row Total
Press Agentry	0 11.6	10 9.3	10 9.6	10 8.3	15 6.3	45 33.1%
Public Information	5 6.4	4 5.1	10 5.3	6 4.6	0 3.5	25 18.4%
Two-Way Asymmetric	18 13.4	12 10.7	9 11.1	9 9.6	4 7.3	52 38.2%
Two-Way Symmetric	12 3.6	2 2.9	0 3.0	0 2.6	0 2.0	14 10.3%
Column Total	35 25.7%	28 20.6%	29 21.3%	25 18.4%	19 14.0%	136 100.0%

Table 4

Relative Importance of Interpersonal Communication in Formative Research in Award-Winning PR Cases Over Time

1970	1975	1980	1985	1990
1.7[a]	1.5[ab]	1.9[a]	2.1[b]	2.5[a]

Note: Row entries sharing superscripts are significantly different at the .05 level by Scheffe procedures.

Scale: The four-point ratings scale ranged from 0 = not important at all/not applicable to 3 = very important.

Appendix A: Taxonomy used in the Content Analysis of the 1990 PRSA Silver Anvil Award Winners

Theory: Personal Constructivism
Basic assumptions (Burleson, 1987; Kelly, 1970; O'Keefe & Shepherd, 1989):

* cognitive complexity related to ability to create/understand complex messages
* uses system of personal constructs for impression formation to evaluate events
* self-presentation part of social interaction
* cognitive complexity/constructivism factor in conflict resolution
* person-centered (in PR need to view organization as "person" entity equivalent)

Operational definition: campaign-building around a symbol (or construct) that is found to have particular meaning for a particular audience or creating a construct/imposing meaning on a particular construct to communicate with a particular audience. Image- and identity-building.

PR example: "yellow ribbons" as a PR tactic to build patriotism in the U.S. during the Persian Gulf war; "red ribbons" for AIDS awareness.

Grunig's models: 1, 2, 3, 4

Theory: Information theory
Basic assumptions (Albrecht & Adelman, 1987; Berger & Bradac, 1982; Darnell, 1972):

* uncertainty reduction
* information is what we don't know -- answer to question 'what's new'
* information enhances predictability
* assumes people have tolerance for error
* need to assess cost to deliver message clearly
* involves intentionality, mindfulness
* information is gathered to test value, significance
* uncertainty reduction and source credibility may be linked
* control dimensions exist in instructional messages, problem-solving techniques

Operational definition: public relations built around the dissemination of information for the primary purpose of reducing uncertainties in target publics.

PR example: Versions of the American Cancer Society "get a mammogram" campaign designed to reduce fears about mammogram testing procedures.

Grunig's models 1, 2, 3, 4

2--THEORIES TAXONOMY

Theory: Social exchange
Basic assumptions (Hinde, 1979; Homans, 1961):
* relationships work like monetary transactions with cost-benefit analyses and ratios
* as long as getting desired benefits, relationships will continue
* comparison level of alternatives based on minimum standards
* evaluation against cost-rewards matrix:
  - distributive justice -- rewards should be proportional to costs
  - relationship may not be sustained unless profitable

Operational definition: public relations campaigns which focus on promoting an expressed benefit to the target public in exchange for buying the client/organization's goods and/or services.

PR example: eat oat bran campaign to lower cholesterol

Grunig's models: 3, 4

Theory: Social influence
Basic assumptions (Miller, Boster, Roloff, & Seibold, 1987; Seibold, Cantrill, Meyers, 1985):
* rhetorical perspective
* social influence -- compliance gaining, goals to elicit desired responses
* compliance-gaining through information-seeking
* control-, goal-oriented to influence outcomes implies intention, activity, strategic
* persuasive messages, can also be informative
* uses language as symbols but from classic rhetorical perspective (manipulation might be when persuasion feels bad)
* action model of designing messages to achieve desired outcomes
* assumes can accomplish goals through communication behaviors
* source-oriented model

Operational definition: PR campaign with client/organization strategically targeting publics to respond to carefully designed messages with prescribed opinions/attitudes and/or behaviors; compliance-gaining.

PR example: Johnson & Johnson's strategy of launching its tamper-proof packaging before federally-mandated deadlines following the first Tylenol poisoning crisis as a way of maintaining/increasing the product's market share.

Grunig's models: 3

3--THEORIES TAXONOMY

Theory: Developmental approaches
Basic assumptions (Delia, 1980; Werner & Haggard, 1986):
* Relationships emerge and develop as a product of joint activities over time
* trajectories can change, goals not always intimacy
* identity management and negotiation important
* may not be linear, may be cyclical -- onion-model
* ascertain costs/rewards -- move towards rewards
* uncertainty reduction -- stage of relationship
* share same constructs -- relationship likely

Operational definition: campaigns that "build" relationships with target audiences based on mutual rewards.

PR example: Corporate community relations programs such as Mobil Oil's provocative, 20-year-long issues advertising PR campaign.

Grunig's models: 3, 4

Theory: Symbolic interactionism
Basic assumptions (Goffman, 1959; Meltzer, 1972):
* Socially constructed reality, reality defined through social interaction
* shift to emphasis on relationship, interaction, dyad, instead of individual
* we construct our realities, how we see ourselves is defined socially
* human is actor vs. reactor, construction worker
* meta-thinking, looking-glass self
* role-playing: we become who we are by roles we play
* impression management: making certain expressions to form certain impressions; control message to elicit certain reactions
* presentation of self

Operational definition: PR campaigns that utilize symbols to create purposefully designed images; role-playing/ image-building.

PR example: White House dissemination to news media of photography of President Reagan riding a white horse to play on fearless American frontiersman mythology at times when Reagan needed an image boost.

Grunig's models: 3, 4

4--THEORIES TAXONOMY

Systems Theory

Basic assumptions (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1989; Laing, 1967; Pearce, 1987; Ruben, 1972; Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967):

* self-regulating systems
* framing as communication tactic
* focus on meaning in patterns, inter-connectedness over time, emphasis on relationships, not individuals in them
* participation in communication, engagement in communication, coordinated performance
* multi-directional, non-linear, non-random hierarchy and punctuation may determine meaning: meaning in pieces of behavior, not in symbols
* non-summativity -- sum not equal to parts, co-dependent; change in one part affects change in another
* functional approach -- what, not why
* meanings between people, not within them
* communication affects behavior (the pragmatic aspect)
* negotiated relationships (rules aspect)
* functional coorientation

Operational definition: campaigns in which the PR client/organization is as likely to be affected by the relationship as are the targeted publics; the client/organization and the target publics act as sub-systems in a systemic relationship.

PR example: corporate-community relations campaigns in which, in order for the client/organization to be perceived by its target publics as a good corporate citizen, the client/organization has to act like a good corporate citizen, even if that means changing its intended behavior so that behavior is in the target public's interest as well as its own.

Grunig's models: 3, and especially 4

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